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Confluent learning in developing change management capabilities

Dr Mark Loon
Abstract

Change management is a multi- and trans-disciplinary field that draws from a wide range of disciplines, but none more important than organisational behaviour. The field of organisational behaviour informs change management of the role of people-based factors that substantially augments the complexity of many change phenomena. The aim of this paper is to explore and highlight the role of confluent learning in supporting the development of change management capabilities. To support the validity of the curriculum design a qualitative approach based on reflective inquiry was adopted. A confluent learning approach helped to stimulate affective states (e.g. appreciation and empathy) in complementing cognitive gains (e.g. critical thinking).

Keywords: confluent learning, change management, instructional design, cognitive ability, affective capacity
Introduction

In an ever increasingly dynamic environment, organisations constantly find themselves having to adapt and change (Todnem By, 2005). Indeed, a premium is placed on managers that possess effective change management capabilities. However, even in times when organisations have significantly invested in change management training and development programmes, most change management initiatives have failed (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990; Kegan & Lahey, 2001). Clearly, there are many and varied factors that contribute to these failures, and at times it is just sheer complexity of change. Nonetheless, these failures show that there is a need to revisit and rethink the way change managers are educated and developed.

Change management is both a science and an art form. However, the emphasis on the rational aspect of change management at times impede change managers from fully recognising and appreciating the significant role of the human element (Armenakis & Harris, 2009; Oreg, 2003). The field of organisational behaviour plays a significant role in change management, in particular the role affect (Judge & Robbins, 2014; Senior & Swailes, 2010). Affect plays two roles; educating students, in particular undergraduate students, of the ubiquitous presence of emotions within change recipients (e.g. staff members impacted by change) (Garvin & Roberto, 2005) and enabling students’ emotional development as future change managers, for example, in developing empathy (Misch & Peloquin, 2005), and the personal perseverance in dealing with ambiguity (Loon, 2016).

Most change management curriculum inevitably involves the enhancement of knowledge and skills, in informing and teaching students of the role and dynamics of emotions. However, equal importance needs to be provided to develop ‘attitudes’, which are essentially enhancing
students’ appreciation, empathy and value of emotions in their development as change managers. A confluent learning approach was adopted in the design and development of the change management curriculum. Confluent learning helps to develop students’ personal affective capacity by integrating cognitive and affective aspects of learning to take advantage of synergies between the two (Misch & Peloquin, 2005).

The aim of this paper is to explore the impact of a bespoke change management curriculum that focuses on both cognitive and affective domains in developing students’ change management capabilities. In doing so, we address the following questions:

1. How does confluent learning play a role in the design and development of a change management, specifically in teaching students about the role of affect in change management and to develop students as effective change managers?
2. What are students’ learning experiences on a bespoke change management curriculum underpinned by confluent learning?

By addressing the questions, this paper contributes to organisational behaviour education by demonstrating the integral role of affect in a change management curriculum using a confluent learning approach. Specifically, how affect plays a role in enhancing students’ better understanding of the nature, dynamics and challenges of change. In addition, this study makes a contribution by demonstrating how affect, through confluent learning, can be applied to develop students to be effective change managers by developing their appreciation of the complexity of change, nurturing their empathy of people-based challenges and to value the impact that people can make in change.
The next section provides an overview of essentials of a typical change management curriculum and the envisaged capabilities to be developed. This section argues how organisational behaviour education, in particular the theme of affect, plays a role in the effective teaching of change management and the development of change management capabilities. The discussion involving affect leads to the justification of the adoption of a confluent learning philosophy. The section on confluent learning describes the approach in light with similar concepts specifically experiential learning and active learning. This is followed by a discussion on the design of the curriculum. A summary of the methods adopted in collecting data from students are provided, followed by a presentation of the findings. The findings are then discussed in light of literature and its implications on teaching.

**Change management and organisational behaviour**

Change management is both an interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary field of study (Change Management Institute, 2013). Change management is interdisciplinary as its body of knowledge draws from across the disciplinary boundaries of for example organisational behaviour (e.g. leadership and learning), systems science and organisational development (Tress, Tress, & Fry, 2005). The interdisciplinary nature of change management suggests that there are many perspectives of change that needs to be considered in developing a robust and fit-for-purpose curriculum (Collin, 2009). Change management is also trans-disciplinary as its knowledge base draws from both practice and academia (Tress et al., 2005). The trans-disciplinary nature of organisational change accentuates the need for a curriculum that enables students to not only do well in their academic assessments but also develop genuine change management capabilities for the ‘real-world’ (Balsiger, 2004; Mento, Jones, & Dirndorfer, 2002).
There are a plethora of change management capabilities (Change Management Institute, 2012; Management Standards Centre, 2014), which would be not feasible to develop within a regular university semester. However, many of the capabilities from both Change Management Institute (2012) and Management Standards Centre (2014) overlap and may be grouped to reflect only the most important capabilities required throughout a change process; namely, awareness, astuteness and adaptiveness (Munduate & Bennebroek Gravenhorst, 2003). Awareness involves being cognisant of environmental changes and trends from a strategic perspective, while astuteness is the accurate interpretation of what the changes in the environment means to the organisation and to plan accordingly using a ‘what-if’ approach. Finally, adaptiveness is the ability to enact change (e.g. communicating, project management) within the organisation in adapting to the environmental change. Table 1 contains a broad mapping of how the skills identified by both Change Management Institute (2012) and Management Standards Centre (2014) maps to the three groupings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 key capabilities</th>
<th>Management Standards Centre</th>
<th>Change Management Institute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Leading change</td>
<td>Strategic thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astuteness</td>
<td>Planning change:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communicating</td>
<td>• Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ‘What-if’ questioning e.g.</td>
<td>• Self-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>contingency-planning, risk</td>
<td>• Thinking and judgement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>management, and setting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>objectives for different</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘scenarios’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptiveness</td>
<td>Implementing change:</td>
<td>• Facilitating change (with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working through issues</td>
<td>change team or change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>that are technical and/or</td>
<td>stakeholders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>people based e.g. problem-</td>
<td>• Learning and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>solving, and decision-</td>
<td>• Influencing others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>making</td>
<td>• Coaching for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Managing people in change</td>
<td>• Project management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teams e.g. delegating and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>valuing and supporting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Managing stakeholders of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>change e.g. influencing,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>motivating, negotiating and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>prioritising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The field of organisational behaviour plays a major role in change management as much of the challenges are due to people-related factors. Indeed, ‘hard’ (technical) change are usually easily addressed, however it is the ‘soft’ people-related change that are most complex, involving high degree of ambiguity and uncertainty (Senior & Swailes, 2010). Organisational behaviour informs change management of the role of people’s attitudes, perception, power, politics and conflict that can impede or facilitate change programmes (Judge & Robbins, 2014). One could argue that above all, the field of organisational behaviour demonstrates that human behaviour in organisational life is driven by emotions, which is intensified in times of change (Ashkanasy, 2003; Harmon-Jones, Harmon-Jones, Amodio, & Gable, 2011). The ubiquity of people-related factors and the role of affect in change environments warrant a focus in change management curriculum (e.g. why people resist ‘rational’ change) (Beard, Humberstone, & Clayton, 2014). Also, the effective management of change by practitioners require the development of the right attitudes and emotional responses, for example perseverance and empathy, respectively, in dealing with change (Conklin, Kyle, & Robertson, 2013). A confluent learning approach helps in bringing together synergies between the cognitive and affective domains.

**Confluent learning**

Confluent learning is holistic, it aims to activate and engage all of the students’ senses (Misch & Peloquin, 2005). It is rooted in Dewey’s (1938) notion of collateral learning and, as G. I. Brown (1971) argues is a “philosophy and a process of reaching and learning in which the affective domain and the cognitive domain flow together, like two streams merging into one river” (p. 1). Confluent learning helps to shape a range of affect-based qualities such as empathy in learners (Misch & Peloquin, 2005; Stover, 2010). Whilst effective change
management skills are a requisite in today’s organisational environment, this appreciation may not always be realised by students. Thus appealing to students’ affect is crucial.

The use of a confluent learning approach has the potential to reveal how different aspects of learning complement and reinforce both cognitive and affective domains in creating an optimum learning experience that allows flow state to ensue (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The exploration and application of a confluent learning approach may facilitate the development of teaching practice in particular the recognition of the direct role of emotions in learning (Goetz, Pekrun, Hall, & Haag, 2006; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002).

The call for a confluent learning approach in education has been present for many years (Castillo, 1974), and whilst the approach has received comment in recent times e.g. Ward and Shortt (2013), it still has not gained wide spread recognition as compared to other learning concepts specifically experiential learning and active learning. Experiential learning is arguably a normative process of learning from hands-on, personal experience punctuated by reflecting and experimenting (Kolb, 2015; Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001), while active learning, although sharing some constituents with experiential learning such as reflection, is framed as a teaching approach (Niemi, 2002; Revans, 2011) that entails a portfolio of active learning exercises. As a philosophy, confluent learning may be situated as an underlying principle of both experiential and active learning. Indeed, there are some elements in this study’s curriculum design that compels students to reflect and to be active i.e. Kolb’s (2015) experiential model and the use of a simulation game. However, the curriculum may not reflect the rigid structures of these concepts e.g. Kolb’s model, or is entirely highly ‘activity’ orientated. Confluent learning provides a focused yet flexible approach such as its ability to emphasise on the role of affect and emotions, and yet accommodating to the principles of
experiential and active learning. All three concepts have similarities, its adoption and application depends on the context. In this case, confluent learning was adopted given the curriculum’s priority in emphasising the role of affect and emotions as content and as a ‘capability’.

**Operationalising confluent learning**

The operationalisation of confluent learning involved identifying, selecting and integrating a set of learning tools and mechanisms (LTM). A summary of the change management capabilities, confluent learning domains and the LTM is in Table 2.

At the ‘awareness’ stage, multiple cause diagrams and rich pictures (Checkland, 1981; Ramage & Shipp, 2012) were used to complement the use of the academic models such as the Political, Economic, Social, Technology, Legal and Environmental (PESTLE) framework e.g. Aguilar (1967), McKinsey’s 7s (Waterman Jr, Peters, & Phillips, 1980) and the cultural web (Johnson, Whittington, & Scholes, 2011). Cognitive skills are developed as students ‘think through the issues’ (i.e. comprehending and analysing) and seeing the ‘bigger picture’ (i.e. synthesis). The affective domain is elicited by appreciating (i.e. valuing) the complexity of organisational problems/ opportunities that are better represented as a ‘chain of events’ rather than isolated events. It solicits the psychomotor through active learning in perceiving and, quite literally, ‘act’ in mapping the issues and exploring how they interlink.
Table 2: Confluent learning in a change management curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change management capabilities</th>
<th>Learning tools and mechanisms (LTM)s</th>
<th>Confluent learning domains (in order of priority) (Anderson, Krathwohl, &amp; Bloom, 2001)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Awareness**                 | • Multiple cause diagrams (Checkland, 1981; Ramage & Shipp, 2012). Building upon:  
   o PESTLE e.g. Aguilar (1967)  
   o McKinsey’s 7s (Waterman Jr et al., 1980)  
   o Culture web (Johnson et al., 2011) | 1. Cognitive (i.e. thinking through the issues)  
2. Affect (i.e. appreciating the complexity and links between the external and internal environments, stimulation due to the novelty of the learning tool)  
3. Psychomotor (i.e. drawing the diagram) |
| **Astuteness**                | • Socratic questioning (in seminars one-to-one with students or in small groups) (Elder & Paul, 1998; Yang, Newby, & Bill, 2005) for:  
   o Multiple perspective taking and framing of problems e.g. Decisions and the Psychology of Choice by Tversky and Kahneman (1986)  
   • Critical thinking activity and assessment using the Cornell CT test, followed by bespoke CT learning and practice workbook designed and created by the authors (Ennis, Millman, & Tomko, 2005). Using:  
   o Situation-complication-question method (Minto, 2009) | 1. Cognitive (e.g. multiple perspective taking)  
2. Affect (i.e. empathise with how different frames may stimulate different types of actions and feelings) |
| **Adaptiveness**              | • Simulation game titled ‘Change Management: Power and Influence V2’ (Harvard Business Publishing, 2013). Identification and application of change levers. To develop:  
   o How the solution can be implemented (generic models):  
     ▪ Forcefield analysis (Lewin, 1951)  
     ▪ Kotter’s 8 step for change (Kotter, 1995) | 1. Cognitive (e.g. identifying root cause of problems/ opportunities)  
2. Affect (i.e. value how a problem is formulated determines how a problem is solved) |
| **All three**                 | • Poster presentation (Billington, 1997; Moneyham, Ura, Ellwood, & Bruno, 1996) | 1. Cognitive (i.e. development of poster)  
2. Affect (e.g. complexity of change and the advanced competencies that change management requires)  
3. Psychomotor (i.e. presentation and articulation of poster) |
The ‘astuteness’ stage utilised Tversky and Kahneman’s (1986) decisions and the psychology of choice theory. Effective thinking is driven by appropriate questions (Elder & Paul, 1998) and Socratic questioning was used one-to-one with students or in small groups (Yang et al., 2005) to help students identify the ‘common denominator’ that may link the symptoms of a problem using multiple perspectives and continuous reframing. Students’ cognitive skills were developed by considering the notion that how a ‘problem’ is formulated determines how a problem is solved, Minto’s (2009) situation-complication-question framework was used as a reference and learners were supported in this step by the use of a critical thinking activity and assessment using the Cornell critical thinking activity and assessment, followed by the use of a bespoke learning and practice workbook (Appendix 1), (Ennis et al., 2005).

The ‘adaptiveness’ stage involved what the solution is and how it may be implemented i.e. what change would be enacted to respond to the ‘problem’. The teaching of this stage used of a number of general models such as Lewin’s (1951) Forcefield analysis in addressing resistance and Kotter’s (1995) 8-step change. However, the effectiveness of static models in developing change management capabilities is limited. To provide a more authentic experience of how change is enacted in organisations, a simulation game, developed by a leading business school from the US, was played by students in groups of four. The simulation game created the opportunity to build and influence an organisational change initiative in four scenarios allowing appreciation that managing change mostly involves subjective feelings and emotions.

In the final integrated activity, students developed and presented a poster to tutors and peers. This activity targeted all three domains challenging learners cognitively when creating posters and kinesthetically and affectively in presenting to their tutors and peers (Billington,
1997; Moneyham et al., 1996). Through the process of preparing for the presentation, the learners had the opportunity to appreciate the complexity of change and the advanced competencies that change management requires. However, it is acknowledged that the same argument could also be applied other in-class activity¹ although this may illustrate the potentially unrecognised value of such an activity.

**Validation of Confluent Learning Approach**

We used a reflective inquiry approach to validate the confluent learning approach. This not only illustrates the degree of effectiveness of the approach but also captures students and practitioner perspectives. Cunliffe (2004) states that knowledge comes from surfacing “tacit practical consciousness” (p. 410). Reflective inquiry helps practitioners to be reflective and reflexive in terms of their thoughts, emotions and behaviours (Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2011; Leshem & Trafford, 2006) and is consistent with the practitioners’ implicit aims to develop their own learning (Van Manen, 1995).

The validation used two data sources, specifically semi-structured interviews supported by reflective journals. Fifty-five semi-structured interviews were held with 9 female and 7 male students (these are the total students who participated but the actual number of students interviewed each session varied as some did not attend class on that day), in 5 ‘session’ over an eight-week period. Each interview session corresponded with a stage of the change management capabilities i.e. awareness, astuteness and adaptiveness. The questions asked were: what was your learning experience at each stage involving the use of the LMTMs? What did you learn? How did you feel? Each of the interviews lasted about 15 minutes on average and was conducted in class. The feedback from the learners was captured,

¹ I thank you for the reviewer for highlighting this
thematically analysed and reflected upon alongside the reflective journals (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). A summary of the interviews conducted is in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>6 female participants, 6 male participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astuteness 1</td>
<td>7 female participants, 5 male participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astuteness 2</td>
<td>6 female participants, 4 male participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptiveness</td>
<td>7 female participants, 5 male participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All three</td>
<td>4 female participants, 5 male participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55 participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings

This section shows the findings from the interviews at each stage. Themes have been identified for both cognitive and affective domains. Table 4 summarises the main themes supported by selected quotes.

Awareness

Many of the students found it relatively easy to associate issues related to a change event. From a cognitive ability perspective, students indicated divergent thinking as they started to notice that the effects and consequences of change not only cut across various fields such as technology and economics but also across organisational functions. Divergent thinking is important in promoting mindfulness (Guilford, Christensen, Merrifield, & Wilson, 1978) in recognising the links and the chain of events (across time and space) that are usually present in organisational change.
Students also indicated the development of some affective capacity in recognising the challenges of the external environment is volatile, uncertain, complex ambiguous (VUCA) (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). For example, as some of the diagrams became increasingly convoluted, students started to doubt their ability in identifying root causes and symptoms. A small number of learners noted that in some cases there could be a subtle difference between a problem and an opportunity, as some ‘problems’ can also be considered as an opportunity. Students also showed appreciation of organisations’ susceptibility to the external environment, and the links between the external and internal environments. A student who has using the National Health Service noted that the organisation was vulnerable to political, economic, technology and socio-cultural domains.

Many students did not initially appear to find it difficult to generate ideas about potential organisational or problems/ opportunities (see Appendix 2) however as they worked through the exercises, students found that the identifying the root cause was not as easy as they had thought it would be. Some learners acknowledged that whilst it was difficult and took time, it was helpful in facilitating them to map the ‘chain of events’ especially when the situation they were examining is complex. The multiple cause diagrams allowed some learners to link changes in the external environments to internal events. Those that did made a genuine effort in drawing the multiple cause diagrams appeared to gain an appreciation for the complexity of real organisational issues.

**Astuteness**

Although this step was a challenge for a number of learners, some of them indicated a degree of astuteness by exhibiting convergent thinking (e.g. insight) (Dow & Mayer, 2004) in identifying the common denominator for some of the issues identified in their selected
organisation. Framing is a helpful tool for students to identify convergence (Dow & Mayer, 2004), and although framing appears to be an easy concept to understand students have found it much more difficult to apply. Some students realised that they had started to ‘really’ understand how framing could be helpful though they still had difficulty expressing it. A plausible reason for the difficulty may be due to the inexperience of the learners as work experience inevitably exposes students to different perspectives. Students who had been on placement (e.g. internship) appreciated the practical purpose of framing as it helps to make change initiatives more ‘do-able’, and keeps the change initiative focussed.

From an affective capacity perspective, students began to further realise and appreciate that some organisational issues may be more multifaceted than it initially appears. The students’ experience in this second stage mirrored that of the first, specifically in terms of understanding the identifying the root cause of the change/ problem. Students recognised that for some organisational issues, there is quite a lot of variability in the perspectives that one could adopt, and that the subsequent factors that are analysed and the corresponding ‘solution’ may also differ depending on how a problem is framed. The discussions through Socratic questioning resulted in learners revising their diagrams from stage one, as they attempted to identify the common denominator in the diagrams, in exemplifying some degree of convergent thinking.

Students also demonstrated development of affective capacity by internalising the ideals of multiple perspectives taking and that each perspective may educe different reactions and solutions (Armenakis & Harris, 2009). Students began to appreciate the value that framing is crucial for effective change management in identifying the root cause and that is usually related to people’s behaviour and mental models (Senge, 1992). Some students had also
started to detect a pattern specifically in terms of the role of people’s attitudes and assumptions in playing a significant role in the problems identified or as part of the solution in addressing opportunities.

**Adaptiveness**

From a cognitive ability perspective, some students indicated further development of evaluation skill and critical thinking (Ennis, 2001; Facione, 2006) in identifying ‘the problem’ (Patton, 2002), what the solution could be and how the solution may be implemented. The simulation game appeared to be popular with learners. It was cited as ‘fun’ or ‘engaging’, though this may have been due to the novelty of it. Nonetheless, the ‘success’ in the use of the simulation game involved some learners ‘figuring out’ the pattern in the application of the change levers. Students who were successful in this may be said to possess reasonable critical thinking skills. The simulation game, that had a balance of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ levers, and in emphasising the human element of change, appeared to make an impression on a few learners as they further appreciated how change “starts and ends with people”, as one student put it.

Some students, in playing the role of the change agent, commented that those in this role had to know how to ‘get around’ effectively, which meant having effective interpersonal skills and being savvy. Furthermore, some of students also mentioned that this lesson was evident in the debates that they had with their teammates in deciding the next steps. While academic change models provided some scaffolding for students, some students expressed concerns about whether their solution would go ‘far enough’, demonstrating some levels of critical thinking as they evaluated the sufficiency of the solution (Natale & Ricci, 2006).
From an affective capacity perspective, students further appreciated that perception about and for change are subjective, in terms of the change targets and the change agents themselves. This was experienced while playing the simulation game and also through working in teams. For example, the simulation game required students to ‘interview’ employees impacted by change and were surprised by the number of perspectives and reactions. As the students played the game one of them noted that ‘friends’ in the game i.e. informal networks, have an effect on another. Students started to place more value on the conceptual and interpersonal skills that change management requires (Mohrman, Tenkasi, & Mohrman, 2003). Students also realised that the role of the individual persons and their perceptions played a major role in the change event, to the extent of the change strategy.

All three capabilities

The final step was an integrated activity in the form of a poster presentation, to help students amalgamate all three stages together as a coherent ‘story’. Some of the students found this to be a challenge as, while they understood that adopting a holistic view is important, they nonetheless had trouble in presenting it in such a manner. The level of difficulty of this task is perhaps based upon how well the learners had completed the individual prior steps.

From a cognitive perspective, some students demonstrated critico-creative thinking in using creativity in structuring arguments in light of available evidence (Fisher, 2001). From an affective perspective, the presence of felt Gestal, which involves a taking a holistic view for effective change to take place, was indicated (Cameron & Green, 2012; Freeman, 1999). The posters also helped to capture the key issues that allowed students to ‘picture’ how things work.
Students also started to appreciate that a key competency in change management is the ability to articulate a coherent ‘story’ (e.g. what is included), including delimitating (e.g. what is excluded) a change management initiative. Some students found the exercise helpful as one who presented her poster said that change can be ‘messy’ and sometimes knowing what to leave out is just as important as knowing what to focus on (see Appendix 3).

**Discussion**

The summary of the findings in Table 4 only illustrates the gains made by the students and does not suggest that there was a complete mastery of these skills nor all the students shared these experiences. But there is evidence to suggest that a confluent learning design does support some students in developing change management competencies.

As argued as part of the design of the curriculum and as illustrated by some students, the field of organisational behaviour, in particular the role of affect and emotions, plays a significant role in change management curriculum in developing change management capabilities. Students have appreciated that people’s different perceptions change events, and that ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ is not always clear-cut. Emotions also play role in terms of the students themselves, as future change managers. By developing their affective capacity such as their empathy, these students may be more readily to recognise, appreciate and value the diversity of views and take these views into account in managing change.
Table 4: The development of cognitive abilities and affective capacity through confluent learning methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change management capabilities</th>
<th>Cognitive abilities</th>
<th>Affective capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Selected quotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Divergent thinking</td>
<td>● “this appears relatively easy as you can look in any part of an organisation e.g. Strategy, Marketing, Finance and HR”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● “it looks easy enough but is this ‘problem’, a real problem? How do I justify it?”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Appreciate organisations’ susceptibility to the external environment</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Astuteness</td>
<td>Convergent thinking</td>
<td>● I can see why…how this works…the issue of the retrenchment, losing clients, different strategy are all interlinked…[tries to explain but stops]…so what the problem is depends…everything is a possibility…so how do I know my frame [or perspective] is correct”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● “it’s seeing where is the source of most of the, isn’t it?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Internalising the merits of multiple perspectives taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Value that framing is crucial for effective change management in identifying the root cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptiveness</td>
<td>Evaluation and critical thinking</td>
<td>● “I think this is the most straightforward part of the assignment… in some sense it’s starting with the pros and cons right?”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Value the conceptual and interpersonal skills for change management</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| All three competencies | Critico-creative thinking | • “there is flexibility isn’t there, I mean you can discuss two things, but the minute to switch one to become the context from the subject, the whole story changes”.

Felt Gestalt | • “I thought it helpful to see everything in one picture, I can see how it all fits in…in some ways, I feel more assured now that everything is in one place”.
• I think I would find easier to write assignment with this [the poster] up on my wall”.

Appreciate a key competency in change management is the ability to articulate a coherent ‘story’ | • “It’s about what is most important isn’t it? I mean everything has a role to play but I can see how if I wanted to sell this to my boss, I would need to keep it punchy”
• “talking through this really helped to clarify things in my head” |
In addressing the first question, confluent learning was adopted as a philosophy, especially given its equal emphasis on cognitive and affective domains. The design of the curriculum ‘operationalised’ confluent learning through the use of a variety LTMs focussed on both cognitive and affective domains in developing each change management capability. The curriculum design also attempted to ensure that each LTM supported and/or reinforced development of each domain in light of one another (Gagné, 1985). The instructional design and LTMs should however meet the needs of learners at particular points of development e.g. those with more substantial work experiences e.g. some postgraduate students vs undergraduates.

In terms of the second question, the interviews with the students also suggest that there were synergies between cognitive and affective development. It is acknowledged that the interplay between cognition and affect is a natural phenomenon, however, the adoption a confluent learning approach helps to ensure that such synergies are not purely incidental. For example, the mapping exercise that students undertook not only developed their divergent thinking skills but also their recognition and appreciation of the complexity of change. Enhancing students’ affective capacity ensures that they are not intimidated by complexities of the real world, which then helps to further develop self-efficacy. Affect and emotions play an equally important role in parallel with cognition as R. B. Brown (2000) argues that learning is inherently emotional e.g. curiosity and ‘interest’ is essential to learning (Mazer, 2013).

Furthermore, whilst the discrete enhancement of both cognition and affect is important, the coalescence between the two is crucial as it helps to change learners’ attitudes and potentially their dispositions (over the long term). Ackerman (2003) argued that the singular view of ability based on intellect does not show the ‘real picture’ of human behaviour. He argued that
developing peoples’ capacity and willingness to do something is as important as developing their capability. Developing capacity and capability results in the improvement of people’s typical performance (Chamorro-Premuzic, Furnham, & Ackerman, 2006).

A confluent learning approach also helps students’ overall professional development (e.g. as accountants, human resource management professionals) as many ‘standard’ professional competencies involve not only effective cognitive abilities but also draw upon the affective aspect of the individual such as in valuing ethical behaviour, empathy in relating others and self-regulation. By equally focussing on students affect development, future attitudes and behaviours work can be changed and developed as part of students’ learning and re-learning throughout their professional life.

**Conclusion**

Confluent learning brings together a range of pedagogic methods to meet the various needs of learners (Castillo, 1974; Ward & Shortt, 2013). This study has found that there is some evidence to suggest that confluent learning support students in developing change management competencies by enhancing their cognitive ability and affective capacity. The role of affect should not be underestimated as R. B. Brown (2000), in a study of MBA students, found that emotions impacted learners’ memory, reflection and evaluation. Also, Pekrun et al. (2002) assert that students’ overall university performance is largely dependent upon their ability to self-regulate and self-motivate.

Adopting a confluent learning design approach may help educators in organisational behaviour to explicitly create a framework of ‘think outside the box’ activities and methods to target each area of development. It is hoped that this paper provides some basis for
organisational behaviour educators to consider the merits of a convergent learning design. A convergent learning approach may be explored with respect to other theories such as action learning and research (Argyris, 1995), experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). A longitudinal perspective may be adopted as the impact of affect may require more time for it to be embedded.
References:


Ramage, C., & Shipp, K. (2012). Expanding the concept of model: The transfer from technological to human domains within systems thinking. In C. Bissell & C. Dillon (Eds.), *Ways of Thinking, Ways of Seeing: Mathematical and other Modelling in Engineering and Technology* (pp. 121-144). India: Springer.


Appendices

Appendix 1: Critical thinking workbook created for students

Critical Thinking in Relation to Assignment 1:
- Evaluate the quality of the argument and identify any logical fallacies.
- Assess the evidence presented and how it supports the argument.
- Consider the credibility of the sources used in the argument.
- Address any potential biases or assumptions that may influence the argument.

Critical Thinking (Further explained in General and for Assignment 2):
- Analyze the argument structure and the relationship between its parts.
- Identify any presuppositions or unstated assumptions.
- Evaluate the strength of the conclusion based on the premises.

Examples of Critical Thinking:
- Weighted cells: A table format can help visualize the key points and arguments.
- Cross-references: Linking different parts of the workbook can enhance understanding.
- Suggested exercises: Providing practical exercises can reinforce learning.

Feedback:
- General feedback on the workbook design and content.
- Suggestions for improvement.

Developing Arguments:
- The use of examples and case studies can illustrate complex concepts.
- Encouraging self-reflection on critical thinking can enhance engagement.

Read your text, analyze your responses, and improve your skills in Critical Thinking.
Appendix 2: Example of rich picture developed by a student
Appendix 3: Example of a poster created by a student

Insufficient Communication between Departments: When Work on Consultation to Manage the Risk of Changing Legislation

Table 2: Framing perspectives adopted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task 2: Theories to apply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Smooth, smooth economical change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adaptation strategy: Results and those</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lens, 2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Initial problem statement

- Time is defined (2)
- Resources: Unknown (2)
- Budgets are defined but hard to measure (2)
- Contexts: None (2)
- Informatio: (3)
- Cost: Internal (3)
- Scenarios: Infant's, 2004 and those |

Table 4: Root Cause Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Four: Recommend and justify appropriate solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Function of the team%
| - The team proposes an initial |
| - Proper communication among the teams |
| - The teams are able to communicate effectively |
| - The teams are able to communicate effectively |

Table 5: Fostered and share change matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Four: Strategy implementation, alternative approaches to IP issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Fostered and share change matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Improved change management and their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Improved change management and their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fostered and share change matrix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Improved change management and their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fostered and share change matrix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Problem statement

- The problem statement is too long |
- The problem statement is too long |
- The problem statement is too long |
- The problem statement is too long |
- The problem statement is too long |
- The problem statement is too long |